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ABSTRACT

This background paper examines the place of community colleges within the overall organization of postsecondary education and the means for governing these institutions in each of the western United States. First, introductory material defines institutional governance and the role it plays in defining the role and mission of community colleges. Next, the paper looks at the expanding role of the states in the governance of two-year colleges, highlighting new areas of state involvement, and the impact of increasing public interest in issues of educational quality and effectiveness on perceptions of conventional structures of accountability and institutional autonomy. After identifying the type of governance structure currently used in the western states, the paper provides additional information on the state-governed community college systems in Alaska, Hawaii, Nevada, North Dakota, and Utah; the local-board governance structures used in Idaho and Wyoming; and the mixed or shared governance structures in place in Colorado, New Mexico, California, Oregon, Washington, Montana, and Arizona. Finally, a discussion is presented of the relationship among organization, governance, and mission. (AYC)

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ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Materials developed for a legislative workshop on community college issues

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ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The previous chapters identify many of the key roles played by community colleges in the WICHE states. The types of students served, kinds of programs offered, and economic development roles played by community colleges reflect state mandates, local needs, market forces, and other factors. This chapter examines in more detail the place of community colleges in the overall organization of postsecondary education and the means for governing these institutions in each of the WICHE states. Organization and governance, central components in defining the role and mission of community colleges, have become the focus of renewed attention as the result of expanding state roles, financial considerations, and public concern for accountability and education quality.

Institutional governance broadly defined encompasses all aspects of the control and direction of community colleges. Under this broad definition governance may involve the roles defined by state constitutions, policies and procedures established by statute, the oversight exercised by legislatures and governors, planning and monitoring by state coordinating agencies, and the legal governance by a local or state board. Because of the overlap between policy and administration, institutional governance also involves the actions of executives and administrators charged with carrying out assigned functions, implementing state or board policies, and tending to the multitude of other responsibilities involved in the operation of community colleges. At this level, deans and department heads, faculty members, students, advisory committees, and local constituencies also participate in governing decisions.

The complexity of governance requires identification of the roles played by various actors or agencies, the formal structures in which these roles are exercised, and the methods used to assign specific functions. This chapter looks first at the expanding state roles in the governance of community

colleges. Second, it examines in more detail variations in formal governing structures and the place of community colleges in each of the WICHE states. Third, it examines major issues and perspectives affecting the role and mission of community colleges in the WICHE states and relates these to questions of organization and governance.

State Roles

In addition to the dominant state roles in financing community colleges, states have a longstanding interest in two fundamental components of community college governance:

1. Role and mission--What populations and educational needs will be served by these institutions, particularly in relation to other components of the educational system and in light of demands on the state for financing facilities and operations? -- and

2. Public accountability--Are community colleges governed and administered to ensure financial accountability, particularly in the use of public funds, and are they effective in achieving specific educational objectives?

In recent years, state roles and interests appear to have become even more direct and encompassing. This has occurred, at least in many states, in conjunction with the increasing dependency of community colleges on state tax revenues as the dominant source of support. Even in those states where the proportion of state funding has remained relatively constant, growth in the size and costs of community college budgets has increased the competition with other institutions, agencies, and programs for a share of limited state financial resources.

New areas of state involvement have been added in recent years, often in response to state or federal policy initiatives or as a reflection of operational changes at the institutional level. These include:

- concern for the social and regulatory aspects of equal educational and employment opportunities;

- responsibility for remedial education, in particular the causes, educational ramifications, and financing of this expanding community college function;

- the larger issues of student mobility and progression, particularly the ability of students to transfer between institutions and effective articulation between components of the educational system;

- community college roles in state economic development initiatives;

- public institution tuition levels and the availability of student financial aid;

- comparative faculty and staff salary levels, and faculty and staff retirement funding.

In all of these areas, states have become more inclined to intervene in community college operations, while institutions have had to respond to a variety of new internal and external pressures.

Recently, the states and the federal government have reflected renewed public interest in issues of educational quality and effectiveness. This concern will continue to affect community college operations in areas such as high school graduation requirements and postsecondary entrance standards, program content and quality, the funding and academic status of remedial courses, and student assessment and testing procedures. State actions in these and other areas could have far-reaching consequences for the operation and governance of public community colleges.

Within this context of multiple state concerns, conventional structures of accountability and institutional autonomy are being questioned and modified. Accountability, which in prior periods referred mainly to holding institutions and governing boards financially accountable for the use of public funds, has been extended to include accountability for achieving certain educational and policy objectives. Are institutions accountable to students and the public for the content and quality of education provided? Are institutions accountable to the state for achieving equal access and employment goals? In the past, community colleges were not often faced with such questions.

This emphasis on accountability gives new meaning and importance to institutional autonomy. How must institutions operate in the face of expanding state expectations and demands to achieve specific objectives and results, some of which lie outside the traditional realms of institutional operations?

What is the appropriate degree of institutional autonomy in order to preserve flexibility, protect the independence of higher education and promote institutional and individual initiative? Are community colleges really autonomous, given the extent of their public financial and educational responsibilities?

Governance Structures

The WICHE states have answered the complex issues surrounding accountability and autonomy in different ways at different times. Governance structures reflect historical patterns as well as more contemporary public policy concerns. Three basic organizational and governing structures for community colleges are currently used within the WICHE states:

- state-governed systems in which community colleges are part of a unified public university or postsecondary system;
- local board governance with community colleges operated relatively autonomously under separate governing boards; and
- some form of shared governing authority involving both local and state boards, and in some states a mixture of local and state governed institutions.

Table IV-1 shows the type of community college governance in each WICHE state and the primary agencies or actors involved in governance. Either in addition to or in place of local governing boards, many states provide roles for local advisory councils, some of which are limited to advising institutions on programs and curricula in vocational areas. At the state level, a variety of governing boards and state agencies become involved. The types of governance and characteristics of each state system are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

State-Governed Systems

In five WICHE states (Alaska, Hawaii, Nevada, North Dakota, and Utah) governing authority for community colleges is centralized in a single state board. All five of these states have a unified higher education governance system for all public two- and four-year institutions. All five of these centralized state systems have some form of local community college advisory boards or institutional councils to provide local input on operational and

TABLE IV-1

COVERNANCE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN THE WICHE STATES

	Type of Governance	Local Boards	Local Advisory Councils	Primary State Agency	Coordinating Agency
Alaska	state	no	yes	University of Alaska Board of Trustees	Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
Arizona	mixed state/local and shared authority	yes (local districts only)	yes	State Board of Directors for Community Colleges	Board of Regents
California	shared authority	yes	yes (vocational/ occupational)	Board of Governors California Community Colleges	California Postsecondary Education Commission
Colorado	mixed state/local	yes-3 no-11	yes (vocational/ occupational)	State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education	Colorado Commission on on Higher Education
Hawaii	state	no	yes	University of Hawaii Board of Regents	
Idaho	local	yes	no	State Board of Education	
Montana	shared authority	yes		Board of Regents of Higher Education	
Nevada	state	no	yes (beginning 1985)	University of Nevada Board of Regents	
New Mexico	mixed state/local	yes (multi-campus)	yes (school boards)		Board of Educational Finance
North Dakota	state	no	yes (curricular)	North Dakota State Board of Higher Education	
Oregon	shared authority	yes	no	Oregon Department of Education, Office of Community College Institutional Services	Oregon Educational Coordinating Commission
Utah	state	no	yes (institutional councils)	Utah State Board of Regents	
Washington	shared authority	yes	yes (not all districts)	State Board for Community College Education	Council for Post-secondary Education
Wyoming	Local	yes	yes	Wyoming Community College Commission	

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curricular matters, particularly with respect to occupational programs. There are, however, a number of differences among these states with centrally-governed community colleges.

Alaska. The eleven community colleges in the University of Alaska system are relatively small and widely dispersed institutions, reflecting the population and geography of Alaska. Headcount enrollments vary from less than 200 in the less populated areas to approximately 10,000 at Anchorage Community College. Part-time students are a notably high proportion of community college enrollments (80 to 95 percent at several institutions). Ten Alaskan community colleges take part in the state's extensive rural education and extension program, which makes use of non-campus facilities at 14 additional locations.

Together, the community colleges and the rural education program are intended to provide relatively comprehensive educational opportunities to all areas of the state. Geographic dispersion and diverse student needs contribute to an organizational structure that is administratively centralized but operationally very decentralized.

Hawaii. The seven community colleges in the University of Hawaii system are also state governed. Six of these colleges are governed by a single chancellor under the University Board of Regents; one is governed by a four-year campus chancellor. Each campus is administered by a provost, with consultation by local advisory boards. All campuses offer liberal arts and transfer courses as well as degree and certificate programs in vocational and technical areas. Together, the community colleges enroll over 60 percent of the total lower division (freshman and sophomore) students in arts, sciences, and general pre-professional programs in the entire state postsecondary system.

The Hawaii community college system also includes a separate Employment Training Office to respond to immediate workforce needs. This program uses state support, federal Job Training Partnership Act funds and other sources to provide concentrated, "hands-on" courses and programs to more than 7,000 students each year.

Nevada. The four community colleges in Nevada are part of the University of Nevada system governed by a single Board of Regents. Each institution is administered by a president. As of 1985 each community college may establish an advisory board, with members from the local service area recommended by the institutional president and appointed by the Board of Regents. These new local advisory boards may review the annual budget and budget requests, advise the president on operational and curricular matters, and serve as a liaison to both the community and the Board of Regents.

The University of Nevada system also has a separate articulation board as a community college-university coordinating mechanism. This board advises the chancellor and the regents on inter-sector articulation policies and oversees cooperative activities in areas such as admission and transfer requirements, student record keeping, calendars, grading systems, and curriculum coordination.

North Dakota. In North Dakota, state governing authority over the five community colleges expanded recently. In July 1984, the State Board of Higher Education assumed governing authority for the three community colleges that previously were locally governed. Curriculum advisory groups assist in the design and evaluation of specific programs. There are also four tribal community colleges not under state control.

Utah. The five community colleges in Utah are governed directly by the State Board of Regents. Each institution is administered by a president in conjunction with an institutional council with oversight responsibilities delegated by the regents. Three of the community colleges offer comprehensive associate degree programs; two institutions offer only associate of science degree programs in vocational-technical fields. Utah also supports five area

vocational centers. Created to consolidate the vocational offerings of cooperating secondary school districts in rural areas, these centers now serve approximately 70 percent adult students. The centers are not a part of the postsecondary system, and are governed by local boards and the State Board of Education.

Local-board Governance

Idaho and Wyoming have community colleges that are locally governed. Although the administrative and governing roles of the state in community colleges are limited in both cases, state tax revenues are the dominant source of support. Local sources comprise less than 30 percent of total tax support for community colleges in Idaho, and 35 percent in Wyoming.

Idaho. Two locally-governed Idaho community colleges provide comprehensive liberal arts and occupational programs. The State Board of Education acts as a facilitator, but has neither program approval nor budgetary authority over these institutions. A third community college offers only vocational-technical programs and is part of the Idaho postsecondary vocational-technical system. In addition, three four-year public institutions (Boise State University, Idaho State University, and Lewis-Clark State College) provide associate degree and certificate programs in vocational-technical fields. These programs take the place of community colleges in their localities.

Wyoming. Wyoming's seven community colleges are all governed by local district boards. Each also uses advisory boards in curricular areas such as business or agriculture. Local and state roles in Wyoming community colleges are changing, however, as the result of legislation restructuring the Wyoming Community College Commission and broadening its powers and responsibilities.

Under the 1985 legislation, a new seven-member commission will coordinate the operation of the colleges, review and approve or disapprove all academic and vocational-technical programs, advise on budgets and fiscal policies,

allocate state support, and establish a management information system. Given the breadth of these responsibilities, the governance structure in Wyoming appears to be shifting to one of shared state and local responsibilities.

Mixed or Shared Governance

Seven of the 14 WICHE states have some form of mixed or shared governing authority over community colleges. A mixed system has both state and locally governed community colleges, as in Colorado and New Mexico. Under the shared governing authority in California, Montana, Oregon, and Washington each community college or district has a local board that exercises legal governing authority, with specified budgeting, planning and program responsibilities shared with a state agency. Arizona has both a mixed and shared system.

Colorado. Colorado exemplifies a mixed system of some local and some state-governed community colleges. Eleven community colleges are state institutions governed by the State Board of Community Colleges and Occupational Education. These institutions have no local boards and no authority to levy local property taxes; they do have five-member "college councils" to review, recommend, and advise the college presidents and the state board. Many of these institutions also have advisory councils for vocational/occupational programs and business-industry advisory councils to coordinate local employment training efforts. Changes are currently being made to restructure governance of the community colleges of Denver to give each of the three institutions greater administrative autonomy.

The six local community colleges in Colorado have separate governing boards. Local tax levies provide 40 to 50 percent of operating revenues, while the state contributes 30 to 40 percent. The local colleges also make use of a variety of advisory councils on vocational programs and local policy matters. Both local and state community colleges are subject to the coordinating responsibilities of the Colorado Commission on Higher Education. The commission's authority with respect to financial support, admissions and enrollments, and overall planning and coordination of higher education was considerably broadened by legislation adopted in 1985. This is likely to affect the roles and operations of both state and local community colleges.

The Colorado system is mixed in other respects as well. Several of the public four-year institutions offer associate degree programs in various fields. These programs take the place of community colleges within certain geographical regions. In addition, Colorado supports seven area vocational schools that provide both secondary and postsecondary occupational programs. Although these institutions may substitute for community college programs in some areas, they are considered separate from the postsecondary system.

New Mexico. New Mexico has a mixed system of state and local community colleges but with several different characteristics. Of the 12 state-controlled community colleges, nine are branch campuses of the three state university systems. These institutions are administrative units governed by the boards of trustees of these systems. The three other state community colleges have separate governing boards, as do the two local-district community colleges. In addition there are three tribal or Native American community colleges in New Mexico, including the Institute of American Indian Arts. These receive various types of federal and state support, but are not subject to state governing authority.

All four-year public institutions in New Mexico also award associate degrees. These programs are intended to replace community colleges in six locations. Three postsecondary vocational-technical institutes offer programs that may be up to two years in length, including courses in the arts and sciences, although these institutions do not have degree-granting authority. One of these institutes recently petitioned to expand programs to the degree level. Responsibility for program coordination and budgetary recommendations for all components of postsecondary education in New Mexico lies with the Board of Educational Finance.

California. California's large community college system, historically locally governed and primarily locally funded, has moved in recent years toward more prominent state roles in both governance and funding. The Board of Governors of California Community Colleges has specific statutory responsibilities for monitoring compliance with state laws, recommending the levels

and allocation of state financial support, and approving college academic plans. The board does not exercise administrative authority over community college programs, services, or operations outside of the state policy areas.

Review of community college missions and coordination with other postsecondary segments in California is accomplished through the California Postsecondary Education Commission and special legislative commissions. Under legislative action in 1984 establishing the Commission to Review the Higher Education Master Plan, an examination of the roles and operation of California community colleges is underway, with an initial report on community college roles and operations due in December 1985. This report and legislation requiring consideration of new funding mechanisms are likely to result in modifications to both the governance and financing of community colleges in California.

Oregon. Oregon's 15 community colleges also have strong local roots and historically have had significant autonomy. All have local governing boards and use local advisory boards for vocational-technical curricula and related matters. State oversight is exercised by the Office of Community College Instructional Services in the State Department of Education. Funding recommendations and state support allocations are made in conjunction with the Community College Presidents' Council. New program approval for community colleges is by the State Board of Education, with review by the Oregon Educational Coordinating Commission. Coordination in such areas as articulation and student transfer opportunities is achieved through state policies, contractual agreements among institutions, and other mechanisms.

Washington. Governance of the 27 community colleges in Washington is shared between local or district boards and a state community college board. Financial support for community colleges in Washington is dominated by state sources, and the institutions have a state orientation in terms of admissions policies and other practices. The supervisory and coordinating responsibilities of the State Board for Community College Education include reviewing all community college operating budgets and preparing recommendations for overall state support, establishing guidelines for the disbursement of state

funds, ensuring the quality of educational programs and community services, and maintaining the state's commitment to open-door admissions to community colleges.

Overall coordinating roles for higher education in Washington have been exercised by the Council for Postsecondary Education. Legislation adopted in April 1985 will broaden these responsibilities under a new Higher Education Coordinating Board. New or expanded responsibilities of this board include new program approval, stronger budgetary evaluation responsibility, admission standards, dispute arbitration, and overall planning. Exercise of these expanded state roles may affect community colleges operations and governance in the coming years.

Montana. Montana's three community colleges also have a shared governance system. Local boards receive direction from the state through the Board of Regents of Higher Education. State roles include supervision and making recommendations to the legislature on funding, budgets, student charges, program approval, and physical facilities built with state funds. These responsibilities apply to all sectors of public higher education in Montana. There are five tribally-governed community colleges in Montana over which the state has no supervisory role. In addition, five vocational-technical centers, governed by the State Office of Public Instruction and supported by state appropriations, provide a range of occupational programs in population centers without community colleges.

Arizona. Arizona has both a mixed state and local system of community colleges and shared governance authority. Three community colleges are locally governed by elected boards, one is a state institution, and 12 have a combination of state and local governance. The state has no direct role in the one tribally-governed community college. The State Board of Directors for Community Colleges, an appointed board with representation from the four-year institutions, exercises supervisory roles with respect to college operations, student qualifications, curricular standards, tuition fee rates, review and funding for vocational-technical programs, and overall planning.

Organization, Governance, and Mission

Demographic changes, clientele, program diversity, economic development roles, and financing all reflect how community colleges respond, in varying ways, to their external environments. Organization and governance, in contrast, reflect more of the internal environment of community colleges--how they fit into postsecondary systems and what constituencies and needs are recognized in governance decisions. This internal environment is often as important as the external environment in shaping the roles and missions of community colleges.

The ambiguity which surrounds the evolving roles and missions of community colleges reflects both the difficulty of clearly translating external demands and the challenge of formulating effective responses internally. The demands and challenges of the next decade are not the same as those of the 1960s and 1970s, when the emphasis was on growth and a common purpose was found in opening the doors of higher education to previously underserved segments of the population. Current ambiguities and future challenges have much more to do with adaptation and consolidation, than with expansion. Policy debates tend to focus on questions of implementation and the educational issues presented by the now accepted principle of open-door community colleges.

These changes pose new questions concerning the role and mission of community colleges, and require many old questions to be confronted in more specific terms. Among those central to the organizational and governing context of community college are the following:

- What are the roles for community colleges in enhancing access to education at all levels through transfer programs? What are the necessary state and institutional roles in assuring transfer opportunities and, through a well-articulated postsecondary system, enhancing individual educational opportunities without unnecessary institutional duplication?
- What are the appropriate state and institutional roles in setting admission or collegiate-level course standards? What institutions and

financing are appropriate for remedial courses and other programs not meeting collegiate or postsecondary standards?

- What are the appropriate roles for states and institutions in setting graduation and progression standards? What measures of student outcomes would aid students, institutions, and states in identifying the anticipated results of community college education?

- What governing structures and practices will help community colleges serve local needs, while contributing to state education objectives? How effectively are both local and state perspectives articulated in the governing process?

- As enrollments change, and perhaps decline, how will the roles and financing of community colleges be affected? Will institutions and states be in positions to respond appropriately to these conditions?

Community colleges and states have responded to these and similar challenges in the past. During periods of enrollment and revenue growth, responses and adjustments were easier. Many community colleges and states in effect embraced comprehensiveness as the appropriate organizational response to expanding social demands, new clientele, and competing state and local needs. The primary question facing community college governance today is the appropriateness of that response in today's conditions, and in the conditions that will exist in the foreseeable future.

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